




Speech By
Cynthia Lui

MEMBER FOR COOK

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FORENSIC SCIENCE QUEENSLAND BILL

 **Ms LUI** (Cook—ALP) (11.41 am): I rise to speak on the Forensic Science Queensland Bill 2023. I applaud the Miles government for taking this bold step to improve and strengthen laws to address deficiencies in Queensland's current forensic services system. Strengthening our laws to address deficiencies means that perpetrators of violent crime, including rape and sexual assault, are held accountable and brought to justice for their actions.

The committee reported that there are deficiencies in the current forensic services system resulting in perpetrators of violent crime escaping justice, adding to the ongoing trauma inflicted on victim-survivors. This government stands with victim-survivors. The steps that we are taking to strengthen our laws are about transferring power back to victim-survivors, giving them confidence that perpetrators of violent crime will be brought to justice.

The changes that we are making today will ensure that forensic evidence will be processed in a professional and effective manner. These measures will allow victim-survivors to report their assault to authorities and not have the fear of subjecting themselves to intrusive and potentially retraumatising evidence collection procedures.

I want to acknowledge the work of the Minister for Health, Mental Health and Ambulance Services and Minister for Women, Shannon Fentiman, who introduced the Forensic Science Queensland Bill 2023 into the Queensland parliament. The bill will establish a statutory framework for forensic services to support the administration of criminal justice in Queensland.

The framework involves establishing a statutory position of the Director of Forensic Science Queensland, a supporting Office of the Director of Forensic Science Queensland and the Forensic Science Queensland Advisory Council. The bill's policy objectives are to establish a statutory framework for forensic services to support the administration of criminal justice in Queensland ensuring high-quality, reliable, independent and impartial forensic services and related advice.

The bill implements recommendation 121 of the final report of the Commission of Inquiry into Forensic DNA Testing in Queensland, led by Mr Walter Sofronoff KC, released on 13 December 2022. The Sofronoff report made 123 recommendations to address deficiencies identified by the commission in the methods, systems and processes used in the collection, testing and analysis of DNA samples in Queensland by the forensic DNA laboratory.

All of the Sofronoff report's recommendations have been accepted by the Queensland government. Recommendation 121 of the Sofronoff report provided for the creation of a forensic science institute for Queensland within a statutory framework similar to that of the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Following the release of the Sofronoff report, the Queensland government announced an initial funding investment of \$95 million to implement the commission's recommendations, including a recurrent funding investment of \$10.2 million for the establishment of Forensic Science Queensland. This has now been established on an interim basis as a business unit of Queensland Health. Adjunct

Professor Linzi Wilson-Wilde OAM, an experienced and internationally recognised forensic science leader, was appointed as its interim CEO and an interim advisory board was also established to oversee implementation of the Sofronoff report's recommendations.

The proposed changes in this bill are truly groundbreaking. If the bill is passed, Queensland will be the first jurisdiction in Australia that establishes, promotes and protects key elements of its forensic services delivery model through legislation. Like I said, this is truly groundbreaking. I am proud to speak on this bill as part of the Miles Labor government, dedicated to bringing justice to victims of crime. Once the bill is passed, it will ensure that Queensland's forensic services are of a world-class standard and conducted in consultation with forensic, legal, health, police and victims support professionals and in accordance with the latest scientific research and evidence.

I want to acknowledge the work of the Community Safety and Legal Affairs Committee, the committee chair, Peter Russo, other members of the committee, the committee secretariat and Hansard. I acknowledge their work to consult Queenslanders far and wide in the examination of the bill. This is a good solid bill. It stands on the right side of history and is another example of this Labor government's progressive movement to serve Queenslanders well. I commend the bill to the House.